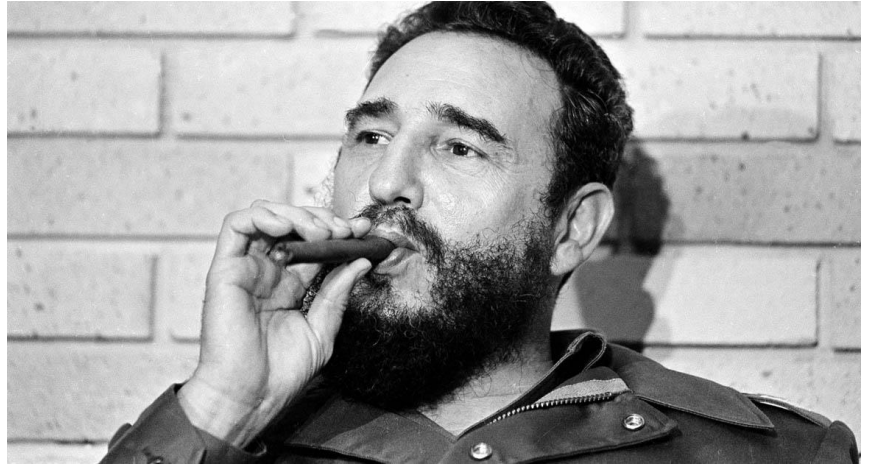


Fidel Castro: "History Will Absolve Me"

1. We have fomented a rebellion against one single power, an illegal power, which has usurped and merged into a single whole both the Legislative and Executive Powers of the nation, and has thus destroyed the entire system that was specifically safeguarded by the [law....
2. They [Batista's military dictatorship] have tried to establish the myth that modern arms render the people helpless to overthrow tyrants. Military parades and the pompous display of the machines of war are used to perpetuate this myth and to create in the people a complex of absolute impotence. But no weapon, no violence, can vanquish the people once they have decided to win back their rights.



3. ...we based our chances for success was one of social order because we were assured of the people's support. When we speak of the people we do not mean the comfortable ones, the conservative elements of the nation, who welcome any regime of oppression, any dictatorship, any despotism, prostrating themselves before the master of the moment until they grind their foreheads into the ground.
4. When we speak of struggle, [we mean] the vast unredeemed masses, to whom all make promises and whom all deceive; we mean the people who yearn for a better, more dignified and more just nation; who are moved by ancestral aspirations of justice, for they have suffered injustice and mockery, generation after generation; who long for great and wise changes in all aspects of their life; people, who, to attain these changes, are ready to give even the very last breath of their lives...
5. The people we counted on in our struggle were these: Seven hundred thousand Cubans without work, who desire to earn their daily bread honestly without having to emigrate in search of livelihood.
6. Five hundred thousand farm laborers inhabiting miserable shacks, who work four months of the year and starve for the rest of the year, sharing their misery with their children, who have not an inch of land to cultivate, and whose existence inspires compassion in any heart not made of stone.
7. Four hundred thousand industrial laborer[s]...whose retirement funds have been embezzled, whose benefits are being taken away, whose homes are wretched quarters, whose salaries pass from the hands of the boss to those of the usurer, whose future is a pay reduction and dismissal, whose life is eternal work and whose only rest is in the tomb.
8. One hundred thousand small farmers who live and die working on land that is not theirs... like feudal serfs, have to pay for the use of their parcel of land by giving up a portion of their products; who cannot love it, improve it, beautify it or plant a lemon or an orange tree on it, because they never know when a sheriff will come with the rural guard to evict them from it.
9. Thirty thousand teachers and professors who are so devoted, dedicated and necessary to the better destiny of future generations and who are so badly treated and paid.
10. Twenty thousand small business men weighted down by debts, ruined by the crisis and harangued by a plague of filibusters and venal officials.
11. Ten thousand young professionals: doctors, engineers, lawyers, veterinarians, school teachers, dentists, pharmacists, newspapermen, painters, sculptors, etc., who come forth from school with their degrees, anxious to work and full of hope, only to find themselves at a dead end with all doors closed, and where no ear hears their clamor or supplication.
12. These are the people, the ones who know misfortune and, therefore, are capable of fighting with limitless courage!
13. To the people whose desperate roads through life have been paved with the bricks of betrayals and false promises, we were not going to say: "we will eventually give you what you need, but rather -- Here you have it, fight for it with all your might so that liberty and happiness may be yours!"

14. The problems concerning land, the problem of industrialization, the problem of housing, the problem of unemployment, the problem of education and the problem of the health of the people; these are the six problems we would take immediate steps to resolve, along with the restoration of public liberties and political democracy.
15. 85% of the small farmers in Cuba pay rent and live under the constant threat of being dispossessed from the land that they cultivate. More than half the best cultivated land belongs to foreigners. In Oriente, the largest province, the lands of the United Fruit Company and West Indian Company join the north coast to the southern one. There are two hundred thousand peasant families who do not have a single acre of land to cultivate to provide food for their starving children. On the other hand... productive land owned by powerful interests remains uncultivated.
16. With the exception of a few food, lumber and textile industries, Cuba continues to be a producer of raw materials. We export sugar to import candy, we export hides to import shoes, we export iron to import plows.
17. Just as serious or even worse is the housing problem. There are two hundred thousand huts and hovels; four hundred thousand families in the country and in the cities lived cramped into barracks and tenements without even the minimum sanitary requirements; two million...of our urban population pay rents which absorb between one fifth and one third of their income; and [three million] of our rural and suburban population lack electricity.
18. Our educational system is perfectly compatible with the rest of our national situation. Where the [peasant] is not the owner of his land, what need is there for agricultural schools?
19. Only death can liberate one from so much misery. In this, however, --early death--the state is most helpful. 90% of rural children are consumed by parasites which filter through their bare feet from the earth. Society is moved to compassion upon hearing of the kidnapping or murder of one child, but they are criminally indifferent to the mass murder of so many thousands of children who die every year from lack of facilities, agonizing with pain. Their innocent eyes--death already shining in them--seem to look into infinity as if entreating forgiveness for human selfishness, as if asking God to stay his wrath.
20. The First Revolutionary Law would have returned power to the people and proclaimed the Constitution of 1940 the supreme Law of the State. . . .
21. The Second Revolutionary Law would have granted property... to all planters, non-quota planters, lessees, sharecroppers, and squatters who held parcels of five cabellerías [about 160 acres] of land or less...
22. The Third Revolutionary Law would have granted workers and employees the right to share thirty per cent of the profits of all the large industrial, mercantile and milling enterprises, including the sugar mills.
23. The Fourth revolutionary law would have granted all sugar planters the right to share 55% of sugar production and a minimum quota of forty thousand arrobas for all small tenant farmers who have been established for three years or more.
24. The Fifth revolutionary law would have ordered the confiscation of all holdings and ill-gotten gains of those who had committed frauds during previous regimes.... To implement this, special courts...would gain access to all records of all corporations registered or operating in this country, in order to investigate concealed funds of illegal origin, and to request that foreign governments extradite persons and attach holdings rightfully belonging to the Cuban people. Half of the property recovered would be used to subsidize retirement funds for workers and the other half would be used for hospitals, asylums and charitable organizations.
25. Furthermore, it was declared that the Cuban policy in the Americas would be one of close solidarity with the democratic peoples of this continent, and that all those politically persecuted by bloody tyrannies oppressing our sister nations would find generous asylum, brotherhood and bread in the land of Martí; not the persecution, hunger and treason they find today. Cuba should be the bulwark of liberty and not a shameful link in the chain of despotism.
26. When you judge a defendant for robbery, Your Honors, do you ask him how long he has been unemployed? Do you ask him how many children he has, which days of the week he ate and which he didn't, do you concern yourselves with his environment at all?
27. You send him to jail without further thought. But those who burn warehouses and stores to collect insurance do not go to jail...You fail the poor wretch who steals because he is hungry; but none of the hundreds who steal from the Government has ever spent a night in jail; you dine with them at the end of the year in some elegant place and they enjoy your respect.
28. Cuba could easily provide for a population three times as great as it now has, so there is no excuse for the abject poverty of a single one of its present inhabitants. The markets should be overflowing with produce, pantries should be full, all hands should be working.
29. What is inconceivable is that anyone should go to bed hungry, that children should die for lack of medical attention; what is inconceivable is that 30% of our farm people cannot write their names and that 99% of them know nothing of Cuba's history. What is

inconceivable is that the majority of our rural people are now living in worse circumstances than were the Indians Columbus discovered living in the fairest land that human eyes had ever seen.

30. I know that imprisonment will be as hard for me as it has ever been for anyone--filled with cowardly threats and wicked torture. But I do not fear prison, just as I do not fear the fury of the miserable tyrant who snuffed life out of 70 brothers of mine. Condemn me. It does not matter. History will absolve me.

31. To those who would call me a dreamer, I quote the words of Jose Marti, "A true man does not seek the path where advantage lies, but rather, the path where duty lies, and this is the only practical man, whose dream of today will be the law of tomorrow, because he who has looked back on the upheavals of history and has seen civilizations going up in flames, crying out in bloody struggle, throughout the centuries, knows that the future well-being of man, without exception, lies on the side of the duty."

Name _____

Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me*

Directions: Use excerpts from Castro's speech, *History Will Absolve Me*, to complete the following graphic organizer. *To absolve* means to let or declare (someone) free from blame, guilt, or responsibility.

Element of Cuban Society	Existing Problems	Proposed Solutions
Government – What does the government do? What should it do?		
Economy – How is money made? Who makes the money? How should the money be distributed?		
Urban and Rural Life – What are people's lives like? What should they be like?		
Education – What is the condition of education? What should it be?		

